



Free Special Education Resources, Consultation, Trainings Your Arizona Parent School Connection

Monitoring Your Child's Progress



Monitoring a child's progress is important and provides parents with information that is critical to evaluating the effectiveness of their child's special educational programming. Progress reports are one of the most underutilized pieces of information that parents receive regarding their child's special education services. Yet, they are the very tool used by educators and related service providers to communicate a child's progress towards meeting the goals outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Federal regulations for the implementation of IDEA 2004, state that an IEP shall include a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goal(s) will be measured and when periodic reports on that progress will be provided. Well developed goals in a student's IEP will identify the skill that a student is working on, the anticipated growth in one year's time, how that growth will be measured and with what tool. The IEP also states how often progress will be reported to the child's parent(s)/guardian(s). This reporting frequency should not be any less than the child's typical peers. For example, if students attending Arizona Jr. High School receive report cards quarterly, then students with an IEP should receive progress reports on their IEP goals quarterly.

Parents should anticipate receiving progress reports from their child's special education teacher; however, they should also receive them from related service providers if their child's IEP contains related services (e.g. OT, PT, and Speech) goals. If a student receives speech services and has instructional aide support for math, parents should receive a progress report

from the speech and language therapist in addition to the one from the special education teacher. Progress needs to be reported on all goals in the IEP.

A standard format for progress reports is not mandated by IDEA 2004 and consequently the format varies depending on the school the child attends. Parents may want to seize the opportunity at the IEP meeting to ask about the progress report(s):

- what it looks like;
- the definition of any codes that might appear on it;
- how (U.S. mail, student backpack); and,
- when they should receive it (quarterly, every 6 weeks).

If a parent does not receive the progress report(s), they should contact their child's special education teacher and request a copy.

One way that parents are able to determine the effectiveness of their child's IEP is by monitoring progress reports. By comparing the expected rate to the actual rate of learning, IEP teams can determine if the student is making adequate progress. If a child is not showing growth on a particular goal, and the progress report states that it isn't anticipated that the child will be able to achieve that goal, then it would be appropriate to request an IEP meeting to discuss other options. For example, the goal may not be appropriate and need to be changed, or perhaps further evaluation needs to be done, or teaching strategies need to be adjusted. The IEP team may also identify some additional accommodations and/or modifications that are needed.

When a report indicates a child is making progress toward a goal, or has perhaps met a goal, a parent may request to see the information that the teacher or therapist has collected which documents the progress. The tool used to gather the information, or data used to monitor the child's progress, should be noted on the IEP. Examples of measurement tools used to monitor a child's progress on IEP goals include:

- samples of the student's work;
- progress monitoring data;
- checklists; and,
- test scores.



Typically, teacher or therapist observation is not an appropriate measurement tool as it is considered too subjective. However, teacher observation of a student demonstrating the appropriate behavior which is then documented on a daily data sheet would be considered objective. The difference being that the action was documented at the specific moment the teacher observed it, noting the date and/or time.

Progress monitoring information/data is also vital when IEP teams are considering extended school year (ESY) services. When teams are meeting to consider ESY, reviewing the student's progress towards his/her goals is an important component of that determination. The data can also be used to identify any loss of skill(s) (regression) and how long it took the student to regain that skill level (recoupment).

The Parent Information Network Clearinghouse (PINC) has several documents which talk about

measurable goals and monitoring progress. *Measurable Goals (SE10)* provides an overview of what goals should look like and explains why each piece is important. Another resource found in the PINC is the *Sample Letter: Education Records Request (SE16)* which can be adapted for use when requesting progress reports. The *Fundamentals of Letter Writing (SE08)* is a document which talks about effective ways to communicate in writing. *The Importance of Good Communication Skills (SA05)* outlines the special education process and pro-active steps parents should take when "monitoring" their child's special education. Using effective communication skills, both written and verbal, is vital to a child's educational success. These resources are available online at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals or by contacting the Parent Information Network at 877-230-PINS (7467).

Resources

Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 2384 N. Steves Blvd., Flagstaff, Arizona 86004-6105, 928-679-8102, 877-230-PINS (7467), www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals

Wrightslaw, www.wrightslaw.com

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring, IDEAs that Work, U. S. Office of Special Education Programs, 1000 Thomas Jefferson St, NW, Washington, DC 20007, 866-770-6111, TTY 877-334-3499 www.studentprogress.org

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